

## PROPHETS OF CANDLEMAS.

### THE WOODCHUCK AND THE BRID.

#### LEGENDS OF THE PURIFICATION—RHYMES OF THE WEATHER AND OF CHRISTMAS GREENS.

If any don't remain about the weather that the season will bring forth after the manner of St. Vincent and St. Paul, on Thursday it may be set at rest, and Candlemas day and sunshine are no prophets never failing. If you cannot yourself read their meaning go out into the fields and watch for the sign which shows all about it. The groundling is an expert on the signs of Candlemas. During the winter he doesn't take much interest in things, preferring to keep warm in his hole, but on February 2 he bestir himself and comes out to look for his shadow. If he were an Indian chief he would be called "Man Afraid of His shadow." The woodchuck feels that way, and before he starts off for a walk he looks about. If the shadow appears there is no more fun for him. He goes home again thoroughly convinced that he is going to have a bad winter, and so disgusted that he will not again come forth in many weeks. If he does not find his unpleasant acquaintance he is satisfied that there will be an early spring and goes off to select a summer home.



MATER DOLOROSA.

The country people of old time watched the groundhog and believed in him. With him they concluded that sunshine was not a good thing for Candlemas, and they embodied their belief in such verses as this:

The hind had as lief see  
As that Candlemas Day  
Should be pleasant and clear.

"The Country Almanac" in 1676 came out with this version of the story:

Foul weather is no news; hail, rain and snow  
Are now expected, and esteemed no new;  
Nay, 'tis an omen bad, the reason say,  
If Phoebus show his face the second day.

Though they expected foul weather, still the women thought that by that time the worst of the winter was past, and they had the proverb:

When Candlemas Day is come and gone,  
The snow lies on a lot of none.

Candlemas is probably the Februa of the Romans, the annual time of purification and atonement, turned to sacred use by the early Fathers to commemorate the purification under the Mosaic law. In the Church calendar the day is the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In late Middle Ages the festival was supremely in honor of the Virgin, and the words of Simon, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also," were taken to denote the first of her seven sorrows, which were often represented in a matter-of-fact way as seven sorrows in the heart of the Mater Dolorosa, as in the sketch here given.



THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

It was Pope Sixtus who started the custom of candle-bearing in 684, according to an old commentator on the festival, who explains its meaning after this fashion: "A candle is made of wax and wax; so was Christ's body within the manhood; also the fire beneath the Godhead; also it becometh our Lady's mode of life, and made her, candle with the fire of love."

Candlemas was a day of great importance to the Church of the Middle Ages, and was not only the favorite time for the blessing of the candles for use during the year, but also for the ceremony among Christian nations analogous to the Mosaic presentation in the Temple. Hence came the custom of bearing candles for those services at other times of year. In England, however, men were not particularly attentive to the pious custom, for it is recorded that "Men seldom offer candles at women's churches, saying our Ladies, but reason it is that they have some preference," and even though she did have some preference, the English before the Reformation were inclined to find fault because they were not allowed to eat flesh every Saturday with joy and pardon in honor of the Virgin, as was done in Flanders, saying "the Pope is not so good to us," and drawing the conclusion that there was as good reason for them to eat flesh with the blessed Virgin as there was for them to be candles to her Church as Candlemas with them as they do."

With the Reformation there came a reaction against the high honor paid the Virgin. John Bale in 1554 complained that it was a Romish error "to bear the candles soberly and to offer them to the Saints, and the candles to be blessed by the Priests." Compatriot, in the thirteenth year of his reign Henry VIII issued a proclamation, saying: "On Candlemas Day it shall be declared that the bearyng of Candles is done in the memorie of Christe, the spirittual lyghte whiche Simeon did prophesie, as it is redde in the Church that daye." This brought the festival back to the old Greek meaning. In the most ancient pictures and mosaics Simeon is the figure of importance, as in type of those who revealed and embraced the Messiah, and his song, the "Nunc Dimittis," furnished one of the names by which the day was known. Here is a sketch from a Byzantine picture, which follows exactly the old Greek formula for the guidance of the sacred painters: The people stand around the golden altar, Simeon holding the child, Joseph carrying the two pigeons for an offering, and the prophetess Anna standing in the background.

On Candlemas all Christmas greens must be taken down. Herrick gives explicit directions in one of

his songs for the disposition of festive greens the whole year through, and this is what he says on this point:

Down with Rosemary, and so  
Down with the Bays and Myrtle,  
Down with Holly, I pray you,  
Wherewith to dress the Christmas Hall;  
That so the superstitions folk  
Not on least branch there left behind,  
For looke how many leaves there be,  
So many goodly words there be,  
So many goodly words there be.

One of the old customs observed in the use of candles was of saying when the light was brought in, "God send us the light of Heaven." Many regarded this as a superstition, but George Herbert, that sweetest of old English Christians, wrote in "The Parson's Complaint": "Pray to the Temple," confessing himself a lover of old customs and superstitions, and adding: "This is a strange of praying to God at all times, but is rather glad of catching opportunities to do them. I have heard of a man who, when he ate food, for which we give thanks, and those that think this superstition rather than superstition nor themselves."

The groundling was not the only way to foretell the future on Candlemas. A sheet of oats may be dressed up in women's clothes and put with a club in a basket, which is called "Bird's Bed." When night comes put it aside and call three times through the house, "Bird's Bed, Bird's Bed, Bird's Bed." Then go to bed and in the morning look for the impression of Bird's club in the ashes on the hearth. If you find it you may have long of good news and a prosperous year. Of course a hearth and ashes are necessary for this trial. Those who have them at most may appeal to the fact that the bird's bed is a common expression of the spirit of Herbert to save a bit at least of heartiness before surrendering to the dominion of catfish radiators, and that the bird's bed is a common expression of the spirit of Herbert to save a bit at least of heartiness before surrendering to the dominion of catfish radiators, and that the bird's bed is a common expression of the spirit of Herbert to save a bit at least of heartiness before surrendering to the dominion of catfish radiators.

## A TENEMENT'S ODD TREASURE.

### THE PORTRAIT MAY BE BY REYNOLDS.

#### ITS HISTORY AND THAT OF ITS POVERTY STRICKEN OWNER—EVIDENCES OF ITS GENUINENESS.

The finding in this city of a portrait reputed to be by Sir Joshua Reynolds is of some interest, and when the picture is discovered on the fifth floor of a West side tenement house, the story becomes a romance. Such a work of art is now at the home of Alexander T. Van Nest, 23 West Thirty-seventh-st., and he traces the account of the misfortune of the last descendant of the original of the portrait, and he cannot help regretting that the question as to its genuineness should intervene to cast a shadow on the narrative. The picture belongs to a Miss Feldman, last of the family of Colonel Hugh Duncan Forbes, whose illness it is. The woman is penniless and in poor health, and were her treasure not known to be the work of the great English artist her simple needs would be provided for some time.



PORTRAIT OF COLONEL FORBES.

The fact that Miss Feldman possessed a painting which might be of such value came to light by accident. Perhaps eight years ago Mrs. Richard Hoffman, of No. 116 West Forty-third-st., one of the warm-hearted women who later among the poor of the great city came upon Miss Feldman, who lived in a tenement house on West Thirty-seventh-st., and who, after her death, were of gentle birth and refined breeding, but exceedingly poor. The daughter's very education made it hard for her to earn a livelihood. She could paint a little, had studied some music, and had a gentleman's smattering of useful arts, but for the rough work by which the poorest women must gain their bread she was entirely untrained. Mrs. Hoffman, in her effort to find some employment for Miss Feldman, brought Mrs. Alexander T. Van Nest to see her. Mrs. Van Nest is also an earnest, unselfish worker among the poor of the metropolis, and one who believes it her first duty to aid the unfortunate to help themselves. She became interested in the woman, and on learning to know her better, employed Miss Feldman to instruct her little daughter. The two good friends, Mrs. Hoffman and Mrs. Van Nest, talked together about Miss Feldman's affairs, which seemed in a hopelessly bad state, and Mrs. Hoffman asked:

"Is there nothing you can sell?"

"I am afraid we long ago pawned everything that we could do without," was the dejected reply.

Mrs. Hoffman looked about the room. Finally she saw on the wall over the bed an old picture. It was in a dark part of the room and she did not see it before. "What's that?" asked the visitor.

"That? Oh, that's a picture of my great-grandfather, by Sir Joshua Reynolds,"

"Sir Joshua Reynolds?" exclaimed Mrs. Hoffman, and she climbed on the bed to get a nearer view of the painting. She brought it into the light and saw that it was old and undoubtedly of artistic merit. Mrs. Van Nest was brought to see the picture. From her acquaintance with the unfortunate works of Sir Joshua, she made up her mind that the picture might be genuine. She kindly laid it brought to her home, so that some of her artist friends might pass judgment on it. F. D. Millet, J. Carroll Beckwith, Elliot D. Gerfield and others have examined it. They agree that, if it is not genuine, it is certainly the work of a pupil of Sir Joshua. The color is especially good.

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FOR THE BIG ARION BALL.

The big procession to be given at the annual carnival of the Arion Society in Madison Square Garden on February 18 will contain eight large and beautiful floats, designed by Dossy Klaty and piloted by Gross and Castleberg, of the Standard, and Mr. Sedle, of Palmer's Theatre. Some of these floats will typify Asia, Europe, America, Africa and Australia, and the Triple Alliance, Caravats and Arion. The wheeled allegories will be drawn by Pierrots, Equivaunts, Negroes, Indians, Arabs, Chinese and others corresponding to the general character of the float. The pageant will contain more than 200 people. Expensive costumes have been provided by the finance, floor, arrangement and executive departments of the Arion Society, and the performance of the drill. Preparations are being made to provide for 15,000 guests.

## NATIONAL GUARD AFFAIRS.

### A COLONEL'S FINE RECORD—NOTES ABOUT THE REGIMENTS.

One of the most experienced and active officers of the National Guard is Colonel William Seward, Jr., of the 9th Regiment. He enlisted in Company E of the 7th Regiment on October 1, 1858, and has been in active service all but one year since. He went to Washington with the regiment as sergeant in 1861, and to Baltimore in 1862. While there he was elected first lieutenant. In 1863 he again went to Baltimore, and in 1864 he was promoted to captain. He was then in command of Company E in the absence of Captain Dutton. The regiment did not engage in any battle, but after its arrival in Baltimore in 1863 the regiment was ordered back to New York to assist in quelling the riots. Lieutenant Seward resigned soon afterward, but re-enlisted as a private in Company E in 1864. He was appointed adjutant of the 9th Regiment in 1866, and elected major in 1868. He declined the colonelcy in 1869 and was elected to the position of adjutant general of the 3rd Brigade. He accepted the offer, and was commissioned on April 1, 1870.

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He has been in the service of the 97th Regiment for six tredecillionths of a second. He has been in the service of the 98th Regiment for three tredecillionths of a second. He has been in the service of the 99th Regiment for two tredecillionths of a second. He has been in the service of the 100th Regiment for one tredecillionth of a second.

Colonel Seward has been in the service of the National Guard for twenty-four years. He has been in the service of the 9th Regiment for twenty years. He has been in the service of the 7th Regiment for ten years. He has been in the service of the 1st Regiment for five years. He has been in the service of the 2nd Regiment for three years. He has been in the service of the 3rd Regiment for two years. He has been in the service of the 4th Regiment for one year. He has been in the service of the 5th Regiment for six months. He has been in the service of the 6th Regiment for three months. He has been in the service of the 7th Regiment for two months. He has been in the service of the 8th Regiment for one month. He has been in the service of the 9th Regiment for six weeks. He has been in the service of the 10th Regiment for three weeks. He has been in the service of the 11th Regiment for two weeks. He has been in the service of the 12th Regiment for one week. He has been in the service of the 13th Regiment for six days. He has been in the service of the 14th Regiment for three days. He has been in the service of the 15th Regiment for two days. He has been in the service of the 16th Regiment for one day. He has been in the service of the 17th Regiment for six hours. He has been in the service of the 18th Regiment for three hours. He has been in the service of the 19th Regiment for two hours. He has been in the service of the 20th Regiment for one hour. He has been in the service of the 21st Regiment for six minutes. He has been in the service of the 22nd Regiment for three minutes. He has been in the service of the 23rd Regiment for two minutes. He has been in the service of the 24th Regiment for one minute. He has been in the service of the 25th Regiment for six seconds. He has been in the service of the 26th Regiment for three seconds. He has been in the service of the 27th Regiment for two seconds. 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